

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 03789 241727Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 INR-10 /049 W
-----103064 241736Z /50
R 241301Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9439

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY RICHARD MOOSE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, LI
SUBJECT: FOOD AID FOR AFRICA

REF: STATE 82578

1. SUMMARY:

LIBERIA COULD USE A SMALL PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM FOR RICE FOR FY 79 AND 80. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD HELP LIBERIA MEET ITS RISING DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS FOR RICE PENDING COMPLETION OF RICE PROJECTS NOW BEING UNDERTAKEN. MOREOVER, A PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM WOULD GENERATE FUNDS TO ASSURE CONTINUED FINANCING OF RICE EXPANSION PROJECTS AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FISCALLY HARD PRESSED. PURCHASE OF PL 480 TITLE I RICE AT CONCESSIONAL RATES WOULD HELP THE BUDGET SITUATION. SINCE THE PROGRAM WILL BE OF BRIEF DURATION, ITS IMPACT ON THE UMR (USUAL MARKETING REQUIREMENT) AND ON DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BE LIMITED. WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION TO ANY GOL REQUEST FOR A PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM FOR RICE. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBERIA'S CONSUMPTION REQUIREMENT FOR RICE IS MET FROM DOMESTIC PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS. DOMESTIC RICE PRODUCTION HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN RISING SLOWLY; 1977 RICE CROP WAS ESTIMATED AT 282,000 TONS, OR 12,000 TONS MORE THAN IN 1976. FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS (1972-1976) ABOUT 42,000 TONS OF RICE HAVE BEEN IMPORTED ANNUALLY, OF WHICH 87 PERCENT WAS U.S. ORIGIN.

3. PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAS ESTABLISHED A GOAL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN RICE BY 1980. TO THIS END THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAS

LAUNCHED A PROGRAM TO HAVE FARMERS PLANT HIGH YIELDING VARIETY OF UPLAND RICE. THE MINISTRY IS ALSO ENCOURAGING FARMERS TO GROW PADDY RICE IN SWAMPLANDS. UNDER BOTH THE LOFA AND BONG COUNTIES INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, RICE PRODUCTION IN BOTH UPLAND SWAMP AREAS IS BEING EXPANDED. PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND TWO BRITISH FIRMS ARE SEPARATELY INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING LARGE RICE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

4. THERE ARE MANY WHO DOUBT WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S GOAL CAN BE ATTAINED

IN 1980. THE SUBSISTENCE FARMER GROWING RICE BY TRADITIONAL SLASH AND BURN METHOD IS SLOW IN ADOPTING NEW WAYS. THERE IS A LACK OF AN ADEQUATE MARKETING SYSTEM TO BRING THE RICE FROM FARMERS TO CONSUMERS IN URBAN CENTERS. THE HIGH COST OF LAND CLEARING AND PREPARATION HAS RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF LARGE RICE PROJECTS FINANCED BY FOREIGN LOANS.

5. HARD PRESSED TO FINANCE ITS REGULAR AND BURGEONING DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS, THE GOL IS SEEKING CONCESSIONAL FINANCING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. A SMALL PL 480 TITLE I RICE PROGRAM OVER THE NEXT TWO FISCAL YEARS WOULD MEET PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REQUIREMENTS FOR CONCESSIONAL FINANCING. FUNDS GENERATED BY THE SALE OF RICE WOULD BE ALLOCATED FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. SINCE THE PROGRAM WILL BE OF BRIEF DURATION, ITS IMPACT ON THE UMR AND ON DOMESTIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS EXPECTED TO BE LIMITED. WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO ANY GOL REQUEST FOR A PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM FOR RICE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOOD ASSISTANCE, PL 480 TITLE 1
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONROV03789
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780219-0446
Format: TEL
From: MONROVIA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780524/aaaaauae.tel
Line Count: 96
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fc59c397-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 78 STATE 82578
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2588317
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOOD AID FOR AFRICA
TAGS: EAID, LI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fc59c397-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014